

289825

Easterling, Deborah

**From:** Knowlton, Jim <Jim.Knowlton@sim.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 23, 2020 11:59 PM  
**To:** PSC\_Contact  
**Cc:** fellerbe@robinsongray.com; Samuel Wellborn; laurapv@aol.com; Bateman, Andrew; Knowles, Alex; Huber, Christopher; John J. Pringle, Jr.; SCDCA; jake@mttlaw.com; Stefan Dover; Eli Renner  
**Subject:** [External] RE: Petition to Intervene 2019-290-WS  
**Attachments:** 2019-290-WS Blue Granite rate case Intervenor homework.rtf

Please find attached my Direct Testimony as Intervenor in the mentioned Docket.

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**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF INTERVENOR JAMES KNOWLTON**  
**DOCKET 2019-290-WS**

I file this Petition to intervene in Docket 2019-290-WD for the following reasons:

- **The Utility asks for a level of rate increase that is FAR above reason or good conscience.** Applying for a 50% rate increase only 2 years after a 30% rate increase when some their most long-standing senior Customers have just been given a 1.6% cost of living increase by Social Security is immoral and unconscionable.
- The **"major capital projects" (cited as a basis for the rate increase) are not a vehicle to recoup private investors' investments in the short term.** The Utility is requested to provide information as to the estimated life expectancy of these projects, and the time and financial terms required to pay them off in a normal and non-predatory manner. Exhibit G requires explanation as to why so many numbers need to change – some by large margin. All utilities have capital projects, but I'm aware of none who request 50% rate increases. Nor has Google helped me to find any. Why does Blue Granite need rate increases far above other utilities, and why does the Public Service Commission continue to grant them in spite of stringent opposition from ORS and the Customers?
- Decades of evidence shows that **the Utility excels in billing and collection, but not in quality water service or customer service.** The neighborhood where I live is rife with stories of legendarily rude and uncaring Utility employees, if not unethical. Just last week, neighbor Shawne Heeren told me about getting a phone call after testifying under oath on the evening of April 3, 2012. "I was sitting at my desk and my home phone rang. The gentleman introduced himself and mentioned what he had heard me say at the Public Hearing. Then he told me that those things I said about them being thieves, and not trusting them – that I need to retract that. And I responded that it's the truth. And he said that it's in your best interest to take it back – to which I replied: I'm not going to do that because it's the truth. But it was very frightening because everything I had said in my testimony was true."
- The Public Service Commission must not continue to reward a Utility that **abuses its customers** with such inordinate rate increases far beyond the cost of living index, yet **refuses to accept responsibility for their poor performance** and



spends years in litigation attempting to **pass on horrendous legal fees** to the customers.

- Although normally I would be in favor of a Round-Up billing assistance program, **I have no confidence in the ability of this company to administer such a program** given the personal experience I had on 3 occasions when calling Customer Service following a billing problem.
- Representative Ralph Norman and Senator Wes Climer have made similar statements in Public Hearings and in writing.

In the previous Docket 2017-292-WS, much of my Intervenor testimony was not admitted into evidence because "it didn't show proper respect for the Commission." Without using any of the language of the former testimony, I would like to point out the essence of my testimony in that case – that the Public Service Commission has a similar role to Rachel Denhollander's mother who was in the room when Rachel was being repeatedly abused by the doctor. Please know that we are being horribly abused by this company, and something must be done.